

# **SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA WETLANDS RESTORATION PROGRAM WETLANDS MONITORING GROUP**

## **MEETING SUMMARY APRIL 8, 2003**

### **Attendees:**

Andree Breaux (San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board)  
John Brosnan (Wetlands Restoration Program)  
Phil Lebednik (LFR Levine-Fricke)  
Mike May (San Francisco Estuary Institute)  
Molly Martindale (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers)  
Eric Tattersall (California Department of Fish and Game)  
Luisa Valiela (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency)

### **1. Introductions/Review Agenda**

Molly Martindale chaired the meeting and opened the discussion with a roundtable of introductions. She said, due to the lower than expected attendance, we should consider rearranging the agenda and inviting both Mike and Phil back to present to the group when there were more people in attendance. Some group members disagreed, stating they would prefer to hear the presentations while the presenters were on hand.

Andree Breaux had some announcements from Josh Collins. The data for EMAP is in and PRBO is developing protocols for monitoring channel density; PRBO is also developing habitat fragmentation analysis methods. The Southern California CRAM (California Rapid Assessment Method) group will be giving a presentation on their progress to a meeting of the Society of Wetlands Scientists in New Orleans.

Andree then gave an update on her and Molly's work on WRAP (Wetlands Rapid Assessment Process). WRAP is based on a method developed in Florida. Molly and Andree's work has been going on at several mitigation sites around the Bay. Andree said this work is going on independently of the CRAM work, and that WRAP has a heavier wildlife component than CRAM.

### **2. Wetlands Project Tracker**

Mike May gave an update on the Wetlands Project Tracker. He stated funding from the San Francisco Foundation and the San Francisco Estuary Project was used to place the individual projects online. These projects were overlaid on the North Bay and South Bay maps created by Stuart Siegel. These projects are now online, following the official launch date two weeks ago. Information that can be obtained at the website ([www.wrmp.org](http://www.wrmp.org)) includes historical conditions at wetlands project sites, current conditions, and any information on each project (including acreages, contacts, etc.). Mike added any interested individual is allowed to submit additional information on any project, including files that can be attached to any project (or website links). If a user's web browser is not able to support the full site, users can elect to view a text only version of the site; this information is available on the first page of the website. Mike expressed

the need to find additional funding to add new projects and add additional information to existing projects.

Molly asked if there was additional funding available from the San Francisco Estuary Project, and Mike said there was none earmarked for the wetlands tracker. Luisa Valiela said that there were overlapping funds for two CRAM guidebooks and that since funding would be needed for only one, there may be a way to extract funds for the wetlands tracker. Mike said that standard data collection sheet would be finalized soon. Mike also said he was looking for people to manage projects and contribute to the site's content.

### **3. Discussion on Ecosystem Functionality**

Phil Lebednik presented his ideas about properly addressing ecosystem functionality and sought the group's feedback. Phil said that this was an informal initiative at this time, but he is trying to come up with a more systematic approach to this topic. He noted that, in the past, regulators and scientists have often looked at ecosystems on a program-by-program basis and are now a long ways toward viewing ecosystems at the landscape or watershed view. Phil has been trying to focus on comprehensive functionality; if we don't understand the functionality of ecosystems, we cannot accurately predict the outcomes of our actions. Phil stated there is a level of uncertainty in current approaches, as often times we do not fully understand underlying ecosystem functions. Phil stated when you focus a project on a certain ecosystem function without a comprehensive consideration of all functions, the project may produce unexpected or unfavorable results.

Phil stressed the need to consider all human factors, as well, stating that restoration managers don't consider humans as part of the ecosystem. Phil pointed out that both processes (physical, biological, etc.) and attributes together equate to functions; human use values have no natural measurement. Luisa asked about flood retention, if it is an attribute or a function? She said the flow of water is a process, and that wetlands provide catchments, which is also an attribute with a numerical value. She felt that connectivity between topics could be difficult to overcome. Molly asked if there was a project that this could be applied to; Phil said some aspects may get incorporated into the mercury monitoring work that he's undertaking with Richard Looker at the Regional Board. Molly pointed out that, from a permitting standpoint, it is hard to stop a project with the premise that the "big picture" is not being addressed. Phil felt that these ideas could lead to a Habitat Goals Project-like effort in the future. He added that this is not quantitative, but many people could be able to envision how this concept fits into some larger schemes. Phil felt that the addressing of ecosystem functionality, as he has described, was absent in the Goals Project. Andree felt this was hoped to come after the Goals Project.

Phil stated the importance of considering these issues given that there is a tremendous amount of money being invested in projects of late, such as TMDLs. He stated there is good planning going on within these programs, but questioned whether they could be relatively more comprehensive. Phil suggested that the current approach of going from a narrow focus to a broad focus could be switched, and take a broad perspective at first and then focus on smaller (i.e., individual) components. Some group members agreed with Phil on this, but stated their respective agency directives can work against this and Luisa noted the conflict between these two approaches; Phil noted this level of "institutional inertia" but also noted things have been

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shifting in the right direction for many years. He felt the public is largely responsible for this shift. Phil stated functionality is a technical issues and that ecosystem management is broader, as it includes policy, as well.

Eric Tattersall said that these types of approaches are beginning to happen now, but that institutional problems do persist. He added that the degree of the approach depends on the project; Eric is currently working with Solano County NCCPs and HCPs and is witnessing there the struggle to address ecosystem functionality.

Molly wanted to know where funding would come from for Phil's concepts; she added staff is currently not paid to commit resources to this type of effort. Luisa agreed, noting that the Goals Project was based on the work of volunteers. Phil reiterated his point, stating whatever is being done, there needs to be a foundation of understanding of functionality of the system, or else we will not be able to accurately predict outcomes. He suggested taking advantage of bigger processes going on now, such as the South Bay Salt Pond process. Molly suggested ecosystem functionality is beginning to be addressed in the Design Review Group. Molly also suggested that long-term research would need to be a large component of an approach to addressing ecosystem functionality. Luisa noted that a toolkit being compiled by and for the Regional Board staff is taking into account functions and values.

**4. Next Meeting Date**

Molly suggested, due to scheduling conflicts with the second Tuesday of May, that the next meeting be scheduled for Tuesday, May 6, from 11:30 AM - 2:00 PM; this could serve as a compromise for conflicts with afternoon and morning meetings for various group participants. Molly also noted there were no agenda items for this meeting, and asked John to note that in an email to the group. The meeting was adjourned.